

Message Text

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60

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 DRC-01 /108 W
----- 120424

R 061045Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3974

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E O 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR PINT LT

SUBJ: RAND DAILY MAIL CORRESPONDENT EXPELLED

REF : A. MASERU 296

B. MASERU 406 NOTAL

1. RAND DAILY MAIL JOURNALIST STAN MAHER AND MAIL PHOTOGRAPHER SUNDERLING DETAINED BY LESOTHO POLICE FOR SEVERAL HOURS APR 5 AND SENT ACROSS BORDER MID-AFTERNOON WITH INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO RETURN. THIS ACTION RESULT OF SENSATIONAL REPORTING BY GRAHAM LINSOTT (REFTEL A) AND MAHER WITH MAHER INCURRING SPECIAL HOSTILITY FOR RECENT ARTICLE CHARACTERIZING CHIEF JONATHAN'S GRIP ON POWER AS SHAKY, DESCRIBING POLICE AS POISED FOR COUP ATTEMPT, AND PREDICTING SERIOUS DISTURBANCES AT EASTER.

2. PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS SECRETARY LEARNED ACCIDENTALLY ON APR 4 THAT MAHER AND SUNDERLING IN MASERU AND CALLED MAHER AT HOLIDAY INN TO COME TO HIS OFFICE TO EXPLAIN HIS REPORTING. MAHER REFUSED. PRESS SECRETARY THEN ALERTED PRIME MINISTER AND WITH POLICE WORKED OUT BATTLE PLAN FOR MAHER'S DEPORTATION.

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POLICE WANTED TO HOLD MAHER FOR TWO DAYS TO QUESTION HIM

ABOUT SOURCES IN PREVIOUS ARTICLES. COMPROMISE REACHED AND POLICE ALLOWED TO QUESTION HIM MORNING AND EARLY AFTERNOON OF APR 5. HE AND SUNDERLING ALLOWED TO RETURN HOLIDAY INN FOR LUNCH AT WHICH TIME MAHER CALLED BRITISH AND AMERICAN EMBASSIES FOR HELP (REFTEL B). MAHER BRITISH, SUNDERLING ISRAELI, ALTHOUGH GOL HAD ASSUMED BOTH SOUTH AFRICAN.

3. MAHER ALSO GOT WORD TO HOME OFFICE AS EARLY AFTERNOON SABC NEWS APR 5 REPORTED HIS AND SUNDERLING'S ARREST. LESOTHO GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ISSUED EVENING APR 5 DENIED ARRESTS, SAYING TWO HAD ONLY BEEN "INTERVIEWED."

4. PRESS SECRETARY ACKNOWLEDGES LESOTHO'S ACTION GIVES MAHER AMMUNITION FOR ANOTHER ANTI-LESOTHO STORY BUT ASSERTS BENEFIT IS THAT IT WILL BE HIS LAST. PRESS SECRETARY SAID LESOTHO MOST CONCERNED ABOUT EFFECT MAHER'S REPORTING WOULD HAVE ON TOURIST TRADE, ESPECIALLY OVER LUCRATIVE EASTER PERIOD, BUT REAL CONCERN IS CLEARLY ABOUT HOW HIS HIGHLY EXAGGERATED REPORTING ABOUT INSTABILITY IN LESOTHO REFLECTS ON CHIEF JONATHAN.

5. WE HAD EXPECTED THAT LESOTHO WOULD NOT INDEFINITELY SIT IDLE WHILE HOSTILE MAIL REPORTING CONTINUED. STEP WE HAD EXPECTED WAS BANNING OF MAIL AND IF PAPER TAKES VOCIFEROUS EXCEPTION TO MAHER'S AND SUNDERLING'S TREATMENT THIS MAY WELL OCCUR.
HAUGHT

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